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A
SERMON,
PREACHED
IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF
WORCESTER,
AT THE
MUSIC MEETING,
SEPT. 10, 1794,

BY ROBERT LUCAS, D. D.

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S E R M O N

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~~Left of Am. A. S. Soc~~

~~J. B. B.~~

THE Profits arising from this Publication
will be given the Charity for the Relief
of Distressed Clergymen, and the Widows
and Orphans of Deceased Clergymen, of
the Diocese of Worcester, Hartford, and
Gloucester, for whose benefit the Sermon
was preached.

W. F. BOWEN, LONDON, D. D.

*THE Profits arising from this Publication
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of Distressed Clergymen, and the Widows
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the Dioceses of Worcester, Hereford, and
Glocester, for whose Benefit the Sermon
was preached.*

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1 THESS. v. 12, 13.

We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you :—And to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's sake.

IT is a strong proof of the first principles of Religion, that the most enlightened ages and the wisest nations have acknowledged not only their truth, but their necessary dominion over the minds of men, as well for the purposes of social security, as for the temporal and future happiness of individuals. All other substitutes prove but feeble instruments for these salutary ends. Philosophy in vain attempts to assume the sublime temper

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and exalted station of Religion, and arrogates in vain its extensive and overruling power in subduing the passions and reducing the conduct of human beings within the bounds of moral and political order. Nor is the addition of human laws, with all their threats and energies, capable of producing the necessary restraint, unassisted by the expectations and terrors of a future judgment.

THESE are truths which have at all times been so strongly impressed on the wise and considerate part of mankind, that they become, as it were, axioms in political morality; and, from their general admission, it is scarcely ever thought necessary to enforce them.

But, if any doubt could possibly find a place among men on so evident and important a principle, as the necessity of Religion for the order and even existence of society, our own times have unhappily furnished us with a dreadful illustration.

tion. To effect the most sanguinary and atrocious deeds, that ever disgraced human nature, an attempt has been made to throw an eternal oblivion over the most unpardonable crimes. The promise of future, as well as present, indemnification has emboldened the robber and the plunderer, and impelled the hesitating hand of the murderer and the assassin.

The consequences of such an impious system have been such as might be expected—full of horror and calamity ! no country ever suffered such political tyranny and devastation, such general and exemplary national punishment as that in which the horrible experiment has been tried. The evils, under which it groans, are unparalleled. Rapine, Desolation and Destruction, with giant stride, stalk through the land in blood and terror ! and the dreadful example exhibited to the world has evinced the wretchedness of society, uncontrouled by the sanctions of another life, and established upon fact
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(what had before been only supposed) that a community of philosophers, without Religion, is but a horde of more ingenious savages.

Happily, however, it is not in the power of any tyranny, aggregate or sole, how daring soever its impiety, or terrific its domination, to subdue the influence of Religion in the human mind. In the confusion of public anarchy, her temples may be overthrown, her altars polluted, and her priests slain with the sword; amidst the din of war and tumult, her *still small voice* may be unheard or unattended; but when these scenes of horror and distraction are over passed, when the bloody hand of oppression is withdrawn, and peace and quietness invite consideration and reflection, Religion will again assume her power and take up her accustomed station in the heart. It is utterly impossible that any people, in the mass, can be brought to unite in so impracticable and infernal a project, or become
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frantic enough to cast away the shield which protects them from the destroyer. Men are not willing to part with heaven's best gift, future happiness and immortality ; their only consolation amidst the common evils of life, and of those severer inflictions, which folly, impiety and desperation have brought upon them.

Important, therefore, and necessary as Religion is to the well-being of every state, and the happiness of every individual ; it is surely wise, it is even indispensable, that an order of men should be set apart for religious instruction, for performing the offices of public worship and adoration to the supreme Being, and impressing on the minds of the people those lessons of morality and brotherly kindness, by which alone the unruly passions of men can be restrained and kept within the bounds of political and domestic order.

Such then, in this country, is the office of the CLERGY ; and, important as
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It is at all times, there never was a period in which the duties of their station were more necessary to the public welfare than the present. Can any rank of citizens be more essential in the composition of a community, or more instrumental in preserving it from desolation and ruin, than that, whose very office it is to correct the depravity of our nature ; to infuse into the public mind the wholesome influence of religion and morality, and introduce *peace and good will among men* ? These principles, firmly and generally established, are what alone can unite and combine the constituent parts of a society, or produce any permanent cohesion in so complex a whole, abounding with repugnant and discordant qualities. The integrity of every society is in daily hazard of being broken and destroyed, and its order and harmony changed for confusion and uproar, without the general and unceasing labours of public instructors.

The awful period in which we live is
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big with public mischiefs and private calamities; and connected as they are, in some measure, with the cause of Religion and her ministers, we are naturally led to these reflections on the present solemnity, instituted, as it humanely was, for the relief of our distressed brethren and their families.

They who can justly appreciate the blessings of public order and decorum, know how important the order of the Clergy is. The magistrate's office is not found more essential to the general good than our own. While the laws hold out their terrors, it is the part of Religion to amend the heart. While the magistrate punishes crimes already committed, it is the part of the clergy, by the sanctions of futurity, to prevent them.

Numberless are the evil deeds, which men may and do commit, that are not cognizable by the magistrate, and yet are as injurious to the peace and happiness of society

society as those that are. These can only be prevented by the influence of Religion, and by those whose duty it is to explain and enforce its precepts. By the constant and impressive lessons of christian doctrine and morality, taught from the pulpit, every man, who will condescend to listen to our instruction, becomes assured that it is both his temporal and future interest to live honestly, soberly and righteously in this present world ; to submit, as every good citizen will, to the Government, under which we enjoy so many and great blessings ; and to do his duty quietly in the station in which God has been pleased to place him.

These are important objects to the public welfare ; and impressed, as I trust we are, with the magnitude and sanctity of our calling, none are so high as to deter us from the conscientious discharge of our duty ; none so low as to be beneath the comfort and consolation of that Holy Religion we are bound to teach, and of which

which all ranks of men stand so much in need. And thus, the rich and powerful are taught humility and condescension; the poor and miserable contentment and resignation to the Divine will. 'Tis our's to guide Religion to the heart; and, by her secret power there, appease and subdue the passions. Under her benign influence the worst purposes are happily turned aside. Revenge softens into kindness; hatred into love. 'Tis our's to impress those, whom we have in charge, with the spirit of meekness and forbearance; with faith and hope, and that best of graces, Christian Charity, that assists and blesses all. Our's it is to fill the repentant eye with tears; and, (the most grateful of our task) to infuse into the wounded spirit (what alone can restore it to health and soundness) assurance of pardon and reconciliation, on renewed obedience, through the merits of a Saviour.

Such is the task, the awful task, which the Clergy have to perform; and they
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who neglect, or affect to despise, our labours, are men, who have but little regard for public order or private decorum; for the general security or their own happiness. — We are persuaded, my brethren, that no such are among those who hear me; but that we shall be esteemed, supported and protected, in proportion to the sacredness of our professional character, and the importance and usefulness of our office to the public welfare: you will, as the apostle directs in the text, “*Know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and you will esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.*”

And, as we trust that we are not unworthy of your protection at all times, so more particularly are we entitled to your kindness and compassion, when distresses and calamities overtake ourselves, or our families; and which we have to lament is not unfrequently the case.

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The present solemnity is a sufficient proof of this melancholy fact, that the temporal circumstances of many of our Brethren, who still labour among you, are in such a depressed state, as to render them wholly incapable of maintaining themselves and their families in that decency and comfort, which their fair expectations, and the use and importance of their professional character, require.

But, in addition to this, we have to remind you of other distresses, which have the most forcible claim to your attention, and solicit, in the strongest manner, your kindness and commiseration. I mean the pitiable situation of the WIDOWS and ORPHANS of those Clergymen, who no longer remain among you.

That want and distress should often attend the families of our deceased brethren cannot excite our surprise, when we consider the scanty provision which many of them were able to obtain,
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and other temporal circumstances attending the sacred profession.

The Church of England has, we all know, at a former period, been stripped of every thing which could be reckoned superfluous ; and, whether we regard her discipline, her doctrines, or her property, the title of *Moderation* is surely her peculiar and appropriate right. Her dress is but the decent garb of wisdom and sanctity, and not the gaudy attire of folly or superstition. Her ceremonies are performed with unassuming dignity, such as becomes the mild and solemn temper of our holy Religion ; and are calculated to excite our devotion and cherish those christian graces which exalt our nature and are productive of good works, faith and salvation.

But, when the splendour of the Church was extinguished, by the alienation of her property, it is to be lamented that sufficient provision was not reserved for every denomi-

denomination of her ministers. The Higher Orders enjoy no more temporal means than are expedient and necessary for the great and responsible stations they are appointed to sustain; and the Parochial and Inferior Clergy are, multitudes of them, possessed only of scanty pittance, by no means equivalent to their deservings, and barely sufficient for providing the common necessaries of life.

We know that Christianity is practicable and efficacious, independent of all outward circumstances, as far as the future happiness of individuals may be concerned. But, we know also that the general practice thereof among the people, cannot be so well secured as by providing for the decent maintenance of such as are to preach its doctrines, that they may escape the neglect, and sometimes contempt, which accompany poverty and distress. When, therefore, the Church was deprived of her opulence, a competent provision at least ought to have been reserved

reserved for the future support of all the various classes of the Clergy.

But even the moderate allowance, secured to them by the laws of the country, they are often unable to obtain with that peace and quietness, which peculiarly benefit their stations, and which they are at all times anxious to preserve, though it be to their own hindrance. What they receive for their support is, almost universally, greatly below the intrinsic value of their property. A few exceptions are not, in this case, to be regarded; nor ought the body of the Clergy to incur any odium on that account. To those who have any real acquaintance with their concerns, their moderation and forbearance are conspicuous. They do not hesitate to relinquish great part of their incomes, of which their families often stand in need, rather than injure that better cause, in which they are engaged, by disputes and contentions.

But,

But, other circumstances, attending the profession, conspire to increase the necessity of the present appeal to your compassion. The Clergy often become the victims of ingenuous education and liberal habits.—More is expected, I know not why, from them, in proportion to their means, than from any other class of men whatever. The open heart and the distributive hand must, on all occasions, appear in that quarter ; and if ability did but keep pace with the will, all would be well. But it is not so—and, in this particular, they are not on a footing with the rest of the world. Their benevolence, their charities, their modes of living, must all bear proportion, not to their *property*, but their *preferment* ; the value of which is generally known. If the expectations of the public be not complied with in these respects, they run the hazard of incurring odium ; of being marked out as penurious, and as making a gain of godliness. Subdued by the terror of
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such imputations, prudence forsakes the ingenuous mind ; and the praise of public spirit at least belongs to the Clergy in that they seldom fail in a liberal expenditure of their incomes derived from their profession. This is, however, in numberless cases, a great hardship ; often distresses themselves, oftener their families ; since what is expended, under these impressions, is probably the whole of their substance.

These circumstances will, in some measure, account for the inability of many of the parochial and inferior Clergy to make a suitable, or indeed any provision at all for their families, unless they are assisted by their own private fortunes.—To this may be added, their entire and very proper exclusion from all secular employments ; which, although they might increase their substance, might also interfere with the constancy of their pastoral duties.

But,

But, although we are excluded from the occupations and gains of the world, and sent to exercise our professional duties in retirement, yet they, who suppose that the life of a parochial Pastor is a life of indolence and ease, have formed an idea injurious to our professional character. The work of a priest and a divine requires unceasing diligence and attention, and his progress is marked with a large proportion of anxieties and cares. When the official duties of our station are over, we have enough to do to qualify ourselves for instructing those, who have need of our instruction. The labours of the mind are no light labours, and are often more injurious to health and temporal comfort than those of the body. The Clergy have to lament that the studious and sedentary habits of their profession often invite and establish many grievous complaints and diseases, which do not reach such as are employed in more active scenes; and the bare competence, which, during

during their own lives, is all that most of them can hope for, is but a scanty remuneration for the expenses of acquiring learning and science, and a life of study and attention in the service of the community, whom they are appointed to instruct, enlighten and amend.

We trust, indeed, that the duties of our profession are, generally, not only decently, but meritoriously performed. We acknowledge the indispensable obligation of an holy life, and a careful and diligent discharge of our duty as inseparable from the sacredness and importance of the character we have assumed. But that some spots and blemishes should appear in so large a body—it is probable. Wherever they exist, our station gives them notoriety. We are, as it were, placed on an eminence, where happy would it be if our virtues only invited the observation of those around us: but, there also our faults and errors become

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more conspicuous, and our slightest inadvertencies are magnified into crimes.

Far removed as perfection is from every profession and every character, it is not the part of Christian Charity, or of common candour, to notice and expose these partial failings; and wherever an eagerness to reproach and calumniate our order appears, its source is generally found in interest, envy, or profaneness. Sometimes it is the trick of avarice, that wishes to withhold the gift; sometimes it is the *vain babbling*, the *sounding brass* of folly and impiety, that treat alike Religion and her ministers; and, sometimes it is the refuge of trembling vice, that catches at some feeble support for its own vileness. The bulk of the Clergy may challenge the prying eye of detraction. They fill their important stations with honour to themselves and advantage to the public. Their lives and their faculties are constantly employed in the service of Religion and of the community; of which
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the most remote and obscure parts experience their beneficial influence. They are as lights shining in a dark place—sacred lamps that spread around them both light and reverence.

Thus, my brethren, have I stated to you the importance of our Order to the public welfare and to private happiness; and also some of the causes of those distresses which unavoidably befall many of our deserving brethren and their families. In doing which, I trust that more hath not been said in our behalf than facts, and the general merits of our order, will justify. The occasion, indeed, on which I address you, and the unhappy situation of those, whom it is my part to recommend to your protection and support, will sufficiently excuse any extraordinary anxiety and solicitude. By you our faults will be overlooked and forgotten, and the claims of the distressed part of us will come with unabated force on your affections,

tions, and produce the full exercise of your pity and compassion.

Many of our brethren, who have unremittingly performed the duties of their sacerdotal office, and have *always abounded in the work of the Lord*, are in situations of real distress. Their calamities are the result of the allotments of Providence. It is not possible, indeed, that every deserving minister of the Gospel can, in this world, be rewarded according to his merits. The satisfaction of having fulfilled their various duties, and the hopes of future reward from the hand of God, are their great supports under their temporal disappointments.—We are persuaded, my brethren, that merit and misfortunes, like their's, will not be overlooked by you; that you will *esteem them very highly in Love for their work's sake*, and administer to them all the consolation in your power.

But, the distresses of these deserving men,

men, respecting their own state, are often much inferior to those poignant solitudes, which they experience for the fate of their families, should they themselves be called away. When a man of an expanded and polished mind, with a heart full of sensibility, reflects that the wife of his bosom, and his tender, and perhaps numerous, offspring may, on his departure, be deprived of every means, not only of comfort, but almost of existence, *the troubles of his heart are indeed enlarged, and his grey hairs are brought down with sorrow to the grave.*

Alas ! my brethren, these sad forebodings are too often verified ! At the present moment the WIDOWS and the ORPHANS of our departed brethren crowd around you with supplications. The hand, which hath stricken the affectionate husband and the tender parent to the grave, hath deprived them of every earthly happiness. He, who was wont to support and protect them, whose ex-
perience

perience and instruction were their guide, is no more!—Their hope, their trust, their confidence is departed! and they ask, in tears, some alleviation of their misery.

The supplicants, whose cause is before you, offer no common claim to the compassion of the affluent. Their sufferings are greatly augmented by their former habits and the stations they have been accustomed to hold in the community. Bred in the lap of tenderness and ease, perhaps of affluence and plenty; educated for situations far removed from penury, their present calamities fall with double weight upon them. Cold is the heart that is not touched with their melancholy change. Pity will not turn away from objects such as these, nor shall their supplicating hands be stretched out in vain. No, my brethren! They anxiously await the effects of your bounty and compassion, and you will not disappoint their

their expectations. You will bid neglect, and penury, and hunger depart from them, and give place to kindness, consolation and comfort — Blessings, which Providence has graciously enabled you to bestow upon them.

